



SYMBOLS, SIGNS
AND WRITING

Kente cloth

Ghanaians weave meaning into traditional fabric patterns

Kente is special fabric that was developed in the twelfth century in the West African country of Ghana. Kings, queens and other important people wore special designs during ceremonies and state occasions. This cloth is still made and worn today by people of every social status.

The kente patterns contain many cultural concepts from history, literature, political thought, codes of conduct, moral values and philosophy. Both the warp and weft threads have names and meaning.



Making Kente

Artisans weave narrow fabric strips on looms. The strips are then sewn together to make the special cloths. The name kente comes from kenten, which means "basket" because the fabric resembles a woven basket.



Abusua Ye Dom

The African name for this pattern—Abusua Ye Dom—translates into "the extended family is a force." Since the extended family is a foundation of Ghanaian society, this cloth celebrates and reinforces the idea of family unity.



M'aso Daee

The African name for this pattern—M'aso Daee—translates into "I have a dream." Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. struggled for social justice. This cloth documents his desire to protect all Africans against spiritual and political inhumanity.

TRADITIONAL AFRICAN